

THE 2023 REPORT BY THE LAYHAM LOCAL HISTORY RECORDER

Unlike last year there was noticeable activity in the parish right from the start of 2023.

During **January**, four recycled oak half-barrels were placed near the picnic bench at Blacksmith's Corner, funded by the Layham Events Group (LEG). A number of green-fingered volunteer residents of Lower Layham are developing this area. The barrels have been planted with seasonal plants. The same group are planting verges in an attempt to widen the variety of wild flowers growing in the village.



The Social Club became established in the latter part of 2022 and swung into action in **January** with a casual get-together followed by a talk in **February** by Roger Kennel on 'Corset Manufacturing in Hadleigh'. This talk proved so popular that the group resolved to arrange regular talks and demonstrations. Thus, **June** saw an illustrated talk by a National Trust volunteer on 'Constable and his Paintings' and in **July** there was an entertaining account of a career in the Church of England by The Very Revd. Jo Delfgou Dean of Hadleigh.



Next, in **August** came a feast of activity with a talk on 'Medical Detection Dogs'; a guided walk around Flatford and a talk by Paul Seymour on his work with 'Tools for a Mission'. On to **September** and Roger Kennel spoke again – this time about 'Old Time Musicals'; next Rosey Nicholls showing her wildlife photography; then a representative of 'The Dog's Trust'; Sue Dodson demonstrating the making of a Christmas wreath; another representative of The National Trust speaking on 'Life Below Stairs' and closing down the year with a Christmas social event.

Parallel with the Social Club, the Village Hall Committee ran a Tuesday Village Hall café from **January** to the end of **March**. Funded by Babergh District Council, a warm refuge with refreshments and social contact was provided and enjoyed by a grateful group of parishioners.

Whilst on a roll, the Village Hall Committee arranged a sell-out Coronation Tea Party during the afternoon of 7 **May**.



Just a week later they organized a repeat book sale along the lines of 2022 – a well-attended day that made another profit for village hall funds.

Two other initiatives in this lively village were establishing a community orchard by a voluntary group and the creation of a working party looking into the possibility of erecting village signs both sides of the river. The first trees were planted late winter on riverside land near Layham Mill by kind permission of the owners.

The Layham Events Group (LEG) organized a family fun event and barbecue on Monday 8 **May** to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III. The event brought a good number of people onto the playing field to enjoy a rounders tournament won by the team from Lower Layham.



On that same day the Layham Local History Group staged a fascinating exhibition in Layham Mill of photographs and texts based on interviews with older members of the community about their childhood in the village.



LEG then organized a 'Layham Festive Fair' on 9 **September**. Their two events showed handsome profits of £650 and £820 from which local voluntary groups were offered the opportunity to apply for grants to help their work.

The following funds were awarded:

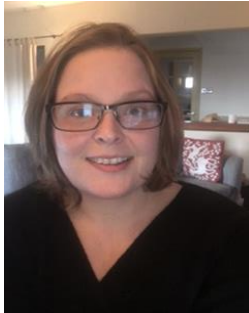
- Layham Local History Group £200 for display costs
- Layham Village Hall £800 for installation of heating in the toilets and a projector and screen
- Laham Village Sign Group £500 towards signs
- St Andrew's Church £300 to support Layham Bug Club



The Parish Council ran two 'tidy-up' mornings in **March** and **October** with around 20 volunteers making a real difference to various corners of the village.

A new 'Ladybird' toddler group started up in **April** with parents and grandparents welcome to join youngsters for a social time together. Starting with just one family it has steadily grown to six families over the year.

The 2019 – 2023 Parish Council met for the last time in **April**. Three councillors retired – Charlotte Britton after 6 years; Michael Woods after 24 years and David Pratt after 28 years.



They were replaced in May by Gilly Cranfield, Will Dunn and Julie Thickpenny who joined John Curran, Sue Keeble, Stephen Laing and Sheila Roberts to make up a full council.



Two small but important improvements were made to the Parish with the erection of a new community notice board on the playing Field and a fifth defibrillator at Cobblers Corner.



In **August** the Layham Bug Club for young children was launched (based at the church). A second event was held during the **October** half-term break.

The Remembrance Service was well attended as usual. This occasion was marked by the 'retirement' of Andy Groves after fourteen years of playing the trumpet for the "Last post" and "Reveille".



There was a flourish of Christmas activity - Christmas drinks were provided by the Friends of St Andrews and the event was well attended. The following day saw the annual Festive Fair – also well attended. The full programme of Christmas Services took place during **December**.

For several months the footbridge over the River Brett at Layham Mill was closed due to rotting timbers. The closure has not been strictly observed by local people as it was very inconvenient. The full repair by Suffolk County Council Highways just before Christmas was very welcome.



Michael Woods

Layham Local History Recorder

January 2024